

Navy—1924
Negroes in.

See Also: Soldiers, Historical.

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Negroes in.

MEMPHIS TENN. APPEAL

JULY 31, 1924
**MEMPHIS LUSES ONLY
NEGRO IN U. S. MARINES**

Official Washington Startled
by Reporter's Discovery.

Memphis has sent to the United States marines the only negro they possess, a reporter for The Commercial Appeal has discovered. Commercial Appeal has discovered, not like the service," he said. So far Ralph Norman Wright, son of Jamesas the records so it was stated that R. Wright, for many years a United States mail carrier, enlisted at St. Louis. The question of race was not put to an issue and Wright slipped in.

When publicity from the marine corps was received at The Commercial Appeal, it was discovered that Wright was colored. Official Washington was surprised when it learned that Wright was not a member of the Caucasian race.

Wright's mother, who lives at 336 Butler Avenue, was advised that he had joined the marines. She wrote the marine corps asking his release. He was under age and had enlisted without her permission, she wrote.

Maj. Gen. J. A. Lejeune, commandant of the marine corps, asked yesterday by The Commercial Appeal's correspondent of the circumstances attaching Wright's enlistment, said "I know nothing of the boy's color. All I know about this case is that there is a man in the service whose mother has asked his release."

Wright is now in the Canal Zone.

A letter yesterday announced that Wright would be released and given transportation back to Memphis.

The marine corps has heretofore been made up of white men of a certain height and weight and entrance requirements have always been rigid.

WASHINGTON, July 30.—The circumstances surrounding the case of Ralph Norman Wright, young Memphis negro, who has served six months in the United States marine corps, and has now been ordered discharged, were not entirely cleared up today, although the matter was discussed at some length with officers of the marine corps.

The first call made on the marine corps headquarters for further information about the case brought the response that the personnel section of the marine corps could supply all the data about his enlistment.

The clerk in charge of personnel, after a search, stated that there was no such person as Ralph Norman Wright shown by the records as being an enlisted man of the corps.

A visit to the office, Gen. Lejeune, commandant of the corps, resulted in one of the commandant's assistants referring the inquiry to Brig.-Gen. Deland, who, he stated, "has handled the case and has the file."

A call on Gen. Deland, however, did not entirely clear the matter up. He stated that Wright had been ordered discharged, and that he was now en route back to this country from the Canal Zone, where he has been stationed instead of Paris Island, S. C.

Gen. Deland disclaimed any information relating to the enlisted man's color, and said that so far as he knew, the discharge authorized resulted entirely from the demand of

the young negro's mother in Memphis that her boy be discharged because he was under the required age. "Congress at its last session passed a law requiring that in such cases in the future the army and navy discharge the men," said Gen. Deland. "This particular case arose from an enlistment that occurred before the law became effective, but we are acting in the spirit of the law, and the discharge of Wright has been authorized, and he is now on his way to this country." It was explained after investigation that the personnel section in reporting no such man on the rolls, was looking up the wrong name.

Gen. Deland says so far he knew the question of the man's color had never been raised, and that he did not believe it has figured in the case. He admitted that it had been the practice to keep negroes out of the marine corps. "There is no law against their enlistment," he said, "but they have been shown that they might not like the service," he said. So far there has never been a negro in the marine corps heretofore.